

The Phases of Childhood That Can Make You Crazy



- A Parent's Guide to Sanity

Raising children can be one of the most difficult jobs in the world. There are times that all of us as parents go through with our children when we feel we just can't handle another minute. Well-meaning friends and relatives often try to comfort us by stating "its just a phase he/she is going through."

Below are seven common phases that parents find most stressful with suggestions on how to cope.

1. **Colic:**

Colic occurs in 10-15% of all babies. Colic is defined when the crying:

1. is fussy and unexplained.
2. is not due to pain or hunger.
3. begins in the 1st month of life.
4. can last from 20 minutes to 2 hours for each spell and parents have great difficulty comforting the child.
5. usually stops at 3 months.

Advice for Colic

1. Don't overfeed the baby in order to quiet him/her this often leads to more discomfort and crying.
2. Help the baby "learn" how to sleep in the daytime - use a front pack or pouch. At night provide soothing rhythmic activities such as a cradle, swing, or rocking chair.
3. If you have to, walk away, let the baby cry - turn on the radio, take a shower.
4. Use support systems, friends, family, and counselors to help you get through this difficult period. Don't be afraid to ask for help!

2. **Night Crying:**

Night criers are infants 4 months of age or older who continue to wake up during the night even after they have given up their night feeding.

Advice for Night Crying

1. Eliminate long daytime naps.
2. Don't keep the crib in your room if you can help it.
3. Put the baby in bed awake - this way the baby "learns" to go to sleep in his/her crib.
4. If the crying continues, go in for one minute or less, don't remove him/her from crib.
5. If crying continues recheck every 20 minutes or so.

3. **Don't Leave Me!**

1. Realize that this is a normal phase all children go through.
2. Offer reassurance, not punishment.
3. Rehearse your separations.
4. Don't leave the room quickly.
5. Try to leave the child with familiar sitters.
6. Don't punish the child by putting him/her in a room alone.

4. **Getting Into Everything**

Children around age one, who are learning to walk, want to explore everything over and over again.

Advice for Exploratory Behavior

1. Put away valuables or breakables.
2. Latch or safety-proof cabinets and drawers.
3. If you can't put items away distract the child into another activity.
4. Punish only when the child's safety is involved (i.e. touching a hot stove).
5. Let the child explore as much as possible.

5. **No No No!**

Saying no is a normal phase most children go through between the ages of 1 1/2 and 3 years. This phase is often irritating but is very important to the child's development.

Advice on dealing with "The No's"

1. Remember this is an important part of your baby growing up.
2. Don't punish for saying "no".
3. Reduce your rules to stay sane.
4. Don't give the child a choice if there isn't one (i.e. do you want to go to bed, take a bath, etc.)
5. State requests positively - "Let's go for a walk" rather than, "Do you want to go for a walk."

6. **The Picky Eater**

Children's appetites normally drop off between 2 and 3 years of age. Children will not voluntarily starve and should not be force-fed.

Advice For Dealing With The Picky Eater

1. Realize that this is normal, as long as your child is healthy.
2. Limit snacks and the amount of milk between meals.
3. Let the child feed himself.
4. Make mealtime as pleasant as possible.

7. **Toilet Training**

This is the process in which the child learns to go to the potty chair, pull down training pants, urinate or defecate, pull up pants without a reminder or assistance from anyone. Most children begin to become ready for toilet training between the ages of 2 and 3.

Advice for Toilet Training

1. Is your child ready? Talk to your child a lot about using the potty and dry pants.
2. Practice using the potty - let the child sit on the potty for short periods throughout the day (but never force the child)
3. Reward your child when he/she uses the potty.
4. Be sympathetic about accidents. Don't scold, encourage to do better the next time.

Remember all children go through phases that are difficult for parents. To cope:

1. Get as much information as you can about each phase and ways to handle them from your local library, pediatrician, etc.
2. Use family and friends if you can to help you out or give you a breather from difficult times.
3. Seek the help of a support group like Parents Anonymous or counseling agency.
4. Call the Parents Anonymous Hotline for information, referral or just to talk!